

**Violence Reduction Initiative # 7**  
**February 25, 2014 | MLK Community Center**

**Key highlights:**

Youth panelists included: Tyrone McMillan, Nick Dalucka, Ashley Newsome and Tyrone Brag. Each provided their background:

Tyrone grew up on the Northside; felt it important to have a good mentor; now an entrepreneur and would encourage youth to give entrepreneurship a try – owns a skateboard company.

Ashley, a former gang member who grew up in foster care; pregnant at 15 and a high school dropout. Felt it was important for people to give “props” to themselves for doing constructive things. Now 1 exam away from getting her GED and has a job!

Nick, born in New Jersey but grew up in the Wilmington area; found it hard to fit in and make friends; felt gang violence is an issue, but is also being used to mask other things.

Panelists felt they grew up in gangs for a variety of reasons, such as: inadequate after-school programming at recreation centers; inadequate family structure and parental participation in their children’s activities; demolition of housing projects and facilities; and lack of affordable housing.

Panelists felt kids cannot come to just any recreation center without fear of gang reprisal; rebuilding community trust is considered a real need; recreation centers (the few we have) close at 7 p.m., leaving nothing for kids to do in the evenings after that.

It was noted by one person in the audience that, since the forums started, it has provided the opportunity for more conversations – in families with children – and around accountability.

WPD Chief Ralph Evangelous was asked whether the police were adequately trained? He responded the WPD does State-mandated training on juvenile development and more training is being planned.

Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo was asked what the City is doing to hire ex-felons? He responded that the City provides financial support to L.I.N.C. and felt more dollars should be focused at prevention and intervention versus incarceration.

In response to a question from the audience as to what can be done to improve things, officials emphasized that working hard and working together is the most important element to success.

The City Manager thanked everyone for staying with the series of forums since November 2013. A report of recommendations will be forthcoming within the next thirty days that will be based largely on previous discussions to date. The report will be posted on our website with an opportunity for the public to provide input.

The City Manager noted that our community is not waiting for a final report to start work. Some initiatives that have already begun include efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to raise funds for the “closing the gap” summer achievement program at D.C. Virgo; more volunteerism and mentoring in the community. There is much more to come.